

Message Text

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COMUSMACTHAI BANGKOK TH

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 3901

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, MILI, MPOL, TH

SUBJECT: U.S. MILITARY REDUCTIONS IN THAILAND

1. PRIME MINISTER KHUKRIT PRAMOJ AND FOREIGN MINISTER CHATCHAI CHUNHAWAN TALKED WITH NEWSMEN TODAY ABOUT U.S. MILITARY REDUCTIONS IN THAILAND.

2. FOLLOWING ARE COMMENTS BY THE PRIME MINISTER: BEGIN EXCERPT

REPORTER: WHAT WILL BE YOUR MILITARY POLICY AFTER THE WITHDRAWAL OF U.S. TROOPS? IN WHAT WAYS WILL YOU REORGANIZE THE MILITARY?

KHUKRIT: WE MUST MAKE THAI ARMED FORCES FULLY CAPABLE TO SAFEGUARD NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE. WE MUST STAND ON OUR OWN FEET. IN OTHER WORDS, SHOULD ANY DANGER THREATEN OUR COUNTRY, WE WILL USE ONLY THAI ARMED FORCES. IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE THIS TARGET, WE MUST BUILD UP OUR MILITARY STRENGTH, AND OUR ARMED FORCES MUST BE REORGANIZED IN WAYS THAT ARE UP-TO-DATE AND SUITABLE FOR THE SITUATION.

REPORTER: (INAUDIBLE)

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KHUKRIT: AFTER ALL TROOPS ARE PULLED OUT, AGREEMENTS

CONCLUDED WILL NO LONGER BE IN FORCE.

REPORTER: WILL A NEW AGREEMENT BE CONCLUDED?

KHUKRIT: I DON'T SEE ANY SUCH NECESSITY. AFTER THEY HAVE PULLED OUT, THERE IS NO PLAN TO BRING THEM BACK AGAIN.

REPORTER: (INAUDIBLE)

KHUKRIT: THAT WILL BE CONTINUED UNTIL IT COMES TO AN END ALSO, AND IT IS ONLY TEMPORARY. THE FIGHTING UNITS MUST BE PULLED OUT FIRST. UNITS REMAINING WILL BE ONLY IN ORDER TO CLEAR UP THEIR ASSETS, AS WELL AS TO INSTRUCT OUR MILITARY FORCES IN THE USE OF VARIOUS EQUIPMENT WHICH THEY WILL TURN OVER TO US. IN THE END, THEY ALSO WILL LEAVE OUR COUNTRY, PULLING OUT BY GRADUAL DEGREE.

REPORTER: REGARDING THE MANILA TREATY...

KHUKRIT: THE MANILA TREATY WILL BE ONLY KEPT, BUT AS I HAVE SAID ALREADY, WE ARE GRADUALLY PHASING OUT THE SEATO ORGANIZATION. AFTER IT HAS BEEN COMPLETELY PHASED OUT, THE TREATY MIGHT NO LONGER HAVE ANY MEANING, OR IT MIGHT BE ABROGATED IN THE END. END EXCERPT

3. FOLLOWING ARE COMMENTS BY FOREIGN MINISTER: BEGIN EXCERPT

REPORTER: THE NATION PUBLISHED A REPORT YESTERDAY STATING THAT THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS HAS MADE A PROPOSAL THROUGH THE AMERICAN EMBASSY FOR ALL AMERICAN MILITARY PERSONNEL AND MILITARY FACILITIES HERE IN THAILAND TO BE PLACED UNDER COMPLETE THAI JURISDICTION.

CHATCHAI: THE FACTS ARE AS FOLLOWS. THE TIME LIMIT WE FIXED, AND WHICH WAS INCLUDED IN OUR STATEMENT OF POLICY, FOR THESE COMBAT UNITS TO BE COMPLETELY WITHDRAWN FROM OUR COUNTRY IS DRAWING NEAR. THEREFORE, SINCE MARCH 20 IS DRAWING NEAR, WE ARE URGING THE AMERICAN AUTHORITIES TO SPEED UP COMPLETING WITHDRAWALS IN AN ORDERLY MANNER BEFORE MARCH 20. THAT IS ALL. WE HAVE REACHED AGREEMENT ALREADY ON WHAT ASSETS, AND WHERE, WILL BE TURNED OVER TO US. OTHERWISE THEY WOULD HAVE TO PULL DOWN AND REMOVE EVERYTHING. WHAT WE WISH IS FOR THEM TO SPEED UP TURNING OVER ALL ASSETS AND VARIOUS EQUIPMENT TO THAILAND URGENTLY.

REPORTER: HAS A REPLAY BEEN RECEIVED YET?

CHATCHAI: SEVERAL MEETINGS HAVE BEEN HELD ALREADY, INCLUDING TALKS IN DETAIL ALSO. THEY MUST NOW WAIT FOR AN ORDER FROM THEIR GOVERNMENT AS TO WHEN THEIR ASSETS, ETC.,
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CAN BE TURNED OVER TO US. IN PRINCIPLE, ALL BASES IN OUR COUNTRY BELONG TO THAILAND ALREADY, BUT WHAT ABOUT THE ASSETS IN THEM. MOVEABLE ASSETS DO NOT BELONG TO US YET. BUT IMMOVEABLE ASSETS, SUCH AS RUNWAYS, LAND, ETC., BELONG TO US ALREADY.

REPORTER: FOR INSTANCE, WILL RAMASUN CAMP BE TURNED OVER TO US?

CHATCHAI: IT MUST BE TURNED OVER TO US.

REPORTER: HAVE THEY AGREED IN PRINCIPLE THAT THEY WILL TURN IT OVER TO US?

CHATCHAI: WE HAVE ALREADY INFORMED THEM THAT EVERYTHING MUST BE TURNED OVER TO US. THERE IS NO PROBLEM IN THE MATTER AT ALL REGARDING ASSETS THAT MUST BELONG TO US. ANY ASSETS THAT BELONG TO THEM MUST BE MOVEABLE ASSETS.

REPORTER: WILL THERE BE ANY AMERICAN TROOPS REMAINING IN RAMASUN CAMP AFTER MARCH 20?

CHATCHAI: THAI TROOPS WILL ENTER AND TAKE IT OVER.

REPORTER: WHAT TRUTH IS THERE IN THE REPORT THAT THERE WILL BE ABOUT 4,000 AMERICAN EXPERTS STILL REMAINING IN THAILAND AFTER MARCH 20?

CHATCHAI: THERE ARE EXPERTS AND PERSONS WITH SPECIALIZED KNOWLEDGE IN VARIOUS OCCUPATIONS, NOT ONLY AMERICAN EXPERTS BUT A VERY LARGE NUMBER OF EXPERTS OF OTHER NATIONALITIES, SUCH AS JAPANESE EXPERTS, BRITISH EXPERTS, FRENCH EXPERTS, ETC. MY ADVICE IS NOT TO WORRY ABOUT THEM.

REPORTER: HOW MANY AMERICAN EXPERTS ARE THERE IN THAILAND AT PRESENT?

CHATCHAI: WE ARE ASKING THEM FOR THE EXACT FIGURE, INCLUDING DETAILS AS TO WHERE THEY ARE. I HOWEVER UNDERSTAND THAT THESE FIGURES ARE FOR MILITARY PERSONNEL, TO ASCERTAIN THE EXACT NUMBER OF TROOPS AND WHERE THEY ARE. THIS REQUEST CONCERNS ADVISERS ONLY, NOT COMBAT TROOPS.

REPORTER: DOESN'T THAILAND FIX THE NUMBER OF ADVISERS WE NEED? WHY DOES AMERICA HAVE TO FIX THE NUMBER TO REMAIN HERE?

CHATCHAI: THIS IS THE SITUATION. THEY MUST INFORM US WHERE THEY WILL BE STATIONED, AND IN WHAT NUMBER, IN ORDER TO BE TEACHERS INSTRUCTING US IN THE USE OF WEAPONS AND EQUIPMENT. AMERICAN MUST ADVISE US ON EQUIPMENT WE SHOULD USE. THEN WE MUST CONSIDER HOW MANY TEACHERS OR INSTRUCTORS

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ARE NEEDED FOR THE EQUIPMENT WHICH THEY WILL TURN OVER TO US, USING ADVISERS AS INSTRUCTORS. IF THE NUMBER THEY PROPOSE IS TOO MANY, WE WILL CUT IT DOWN.

REPORTER: WILL THERE BE ANY TIME LIMIT FOR THEM TO REMAIN HERE?

CHATCHAI: THEY MUST REMAIN UNTIL WE OBTAIN PROFICIENCY IN THE USE OF THE EQUIPMENT, THEN THEY WILL HAVE TO LEAVE.

REPORTER: SUPPOSE THEY REMAIN BUT THEY DO NOT HELP TRAIN OUR MILITARY FORCES, HOW LONG WILL THEY BE ABLE TO REMAIN HERE?

CHATCHAI: IN THAT CASE, THEY WOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO REMAIN HERE. WHAT A QUESTION TO ASK* END EXCERPT

4. COMMENT: IN TYPICAL FASHION, BOTH KHUKRIT AND CHATCHAI ARE PREPARING THE PUBLIC FOR THEIR

EXPLANATION OF THE CONTINUING U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE: ALL
PERSONNEL REMAINING AFTER MARCH 20 WILL BE RETROGRADING
EQUIPMENT OR ADVISERS HELPING TO TRAIN THAI, AND THEY WILL
LEAVE AT SOME INDEFINITE TIME.

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